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Secret CIA report on Afghan invasion

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WASHINGTON — The CIA has concluded that "there is considerable evidence that the Soviets intend a permanent military presence" in Afghanistan similar to the 35-year-old occupation of East Germany and are using the war to test untried weapons "in a combat environment."

"Many of these items of equipment," the top-secret study concludes, "are not actually newly introduced but this is the first time they have been evaluated under combat conditions."

A copy of the report was made available to The Examiner.

The weapons include new types of armored personnel carriers, multiple rocket launcher systems, automatic mortars, fixed-wing and helicopter aircraft, armored mine-laying vehicles, automatic grenade launchers, assault rifles and "a new battle management computer system."

"In the new configurations the kinds of divisions that they mainly brought in, the motorized rifle divisions, were basically developed for use in the European theater or perhaps against China," a senior intelligence official explained.

"They are hardly adapted for the kind of relatively small unit operations in very difficult terrain against guerrilla forces which are their problem in Afghanistan," he said. As a result, the Soviet army of about 85,000 has had to improvise adaptations on a host of equipment.

"They are putting more slits into their helicopters both behind and through the roof in order to be able to install additional machine guns which will be able to be fired at 'the people who otherwise are firing at the Soviets' from mountain tops, the official added.

"This is the evidence cited by the CIA study that projects an indefinite Soviet military presence to support the Marxist transformation of Afghan society:

• The takeover by Soviet officials of senior Cabinet posts in every Afghan ministry except the Foreign Ministry where Afghans occupy deputy director positions "because of the ministry's visibility and its dealings with foreigners."

"All decisions are Soviet," the report states. "The Ministry of Information and Culture is perhaps the most blatantly Soviet-dominated with virtually all press releases being produced by Soviet personnel. Soviets have even been assigned as editors of Afghan newspapers."

In addition, since last fall Soviet civilian advisers said to number well over 10,000 have been drafting a new Afghan constitution and supervising the introduction of new Marxist text books in secondary schools.

Several thousand students also have been sent to the Soviet Union and East Europe for indoctrination. "Russian is fast becoming the nation's second language," the report states.

So total is Afghan dependence on Moscow that Babrak Karmal, the Afghan prime minister, is said to be a virtual prisoner of the Soviet Union. "Except for a dozen sentries at the main gate, the security of the old palace where he lives is in Soviet hands."

"Babrak's bodyguard, chef, driver, doctor and six chief advisers are all Soviets. His isolation is described as so total," the CIA study says, "that his father told Babrak never to enter his house with his Russian retinue. The old man is said to hold the Soviet Union in contempt."

• Economic dependence also "is growing" to

the point that CIA analysts project Soviet domination of the Afghan economy has been insured "for years to come." Soviet engineers have started plotting the construction of a railway link from the Russian border to the Kabul area.

"Soviet domination of Afghan natural gas resources — the controls for the pipeline are in Soviet territory — suggests a Soviet intention to exploit other Afghan resources believed to be of economic significance," the report states.

"Meanwhile, the Soviets are virtually feeding Afghanistan. Several large grant-in-aid wheat deliveries have been announced, the latest on 30 April for 140,000 tons. The insurgency is having a major impact on food production.

"Soviet deliveries will increase in importance," the CIA projects, "perhaps to the point of total dependence."

• The Russians also are building the internal infrastructure to support the takeover for decades ahead.

Two permanent bridges are being built across the Amu Darya River that separates Afghanistan from the Soviet Union. "These two bridges will replace Soviet pontoon bridges utilized by the Soviet overland invasion force which moved into Afghanistan in late December 1979," the report states.

The Soviets also are building up fuel reserves by constructing permanent underground gasoline and water storage facilities at military bases throughout the country. These, however, have been increasingly sabotaged by disloyal Afghan army troops. Permanent quarters, including officers clubs, also are being constructed.

Hardened ammunition storage facilities are being built at the huge Soviet base at Pole-Khomri as is a permanent communications facility to replace mobile field communications used during the first months of the invasion. A large

Soviet military headquarters is under construction north of Kabul.

• In addition to arresting 8- and 10-year-old children who are protesting the Russian occupation, "Army and police press gangs are now raiding residential areas in Kabul, searching for young males down to 15 years despite Afghanistan's legal draft age of 22-25 years."

This results from the defection of almost two thirds of Afghanistan's regular 100,000-man army and the failure of a recent campaign to recruit 40,000 troops despite incentives of free trips to Moscow for NCO and officer training, pay raises and bonuses for extending service.

According to the CIA report, only a few hundred Afghans were recruited.

The Soviet Union also has had to replace its original invading army, which was heavily composed of soldiers from Soviet Moslem republics in Central Asia, with regular army troops, some of whom have been transferred from Eastern Europe.

The Moslems were called up for the first three months of the invasion. Their tours could not be extended without the declaration of a national emergency, something the Kremlin feared would conflict with its well-greased "peace" offensive.

As a result, regular Soviet army troops had to be used. The standard tour of duty for them reportedly is two years. Another indication of the long-term nature of Moscow's plans is the fact that dependents of these troops as well as the Russian civilian advisers have started returning to Kabul.

They began to come in last March but were evacuated in large numbers after the Afghan "freedom fighters" began inflicting heavy casualties on Russian civilians.

But the CIA report is not very optimistic about the chances of these insurgents, who lack a unified command structure and more important, the outside arms help to continue their struggle indefinitely.

"Despite their hardy constitution and somewhat martial life style, the tribesmen are ill-equipped to face modern military firepower," the CIA study states. "Without formal military training they cling to classic guerrilla tactics with which they are familiar."

"They are extremely vulnerable to attack by armored vehicles and particularly aircraft."

The report also states that "medical assistance is virtually nil or available only across the Pakistani border" and concludes "the freedom fighters are experiencing increasing casualties."

"Nevertheless, bolstered by Islam and their hatred of the Soviets, the tribesmen continue the fight despite little external support."